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	منظمة الأغذية والزراعة للأمم المتحدة	联合国 粮食及 农业组织	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations	Organisation des Nations Unies pour l'alimentation et l'agriculture	Продовольственная и сельскохозяйственная организация Объединенных Наций	Organización de las Naciones Unidas para la Alimentación y la Agricultura
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COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE

Twenty-third Session

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Terms of Reference of the Global Soil Partnership (GSP)

Note: the present Terms of Reference are based on the background paper of the Global Soil Partnership (GSP) entitled Zero Version GSP ToR that has been prepared by a Technical Working Group established by FAO after the GSP meeting in September 2011.

I. Background to the Global Soil Partnership

1. Soil is a finite natural resource. On a human time-scale it is non-renewable. Soil, the foundation of agricultural development and ecological sustainability, provides the basis for food, feed, fuel, fiber, water availability, nutrient cycling, organic carbon stocks, biodiversity, and a platform for construction. The area of fertile soil is limited and is increasingly under pressure due to competing land uses and degradation. Urgent action is needed to reverse this trend. Healthy soils are required for feeding the growing world population and meeting their further needs. This can only be ensured through a strong partnership. FAO has taken necessary actions for the establishment of the Global Soil Partnership as requested by the 22nd Session of the Committee on Agriculture¹.

II. Vision and Mission

2. The vision of the Global Soil Partnership is to improve global governance of the limited soil resources of the planet in order to guarantee healthy and productive soils for a food secure world, and to sustain other essential ecosystem services.
3. The mission of the GSP is to develop awareness and contribute to the development of capacities, build on best available science, and facilitate/contribute to the exchange of knowledge and technologies among stakeholders for sustainable management of soil resources at all levels.

III. Disclaimer

4. The Global Soil Partnership is a voluntary initiative and does not create any legally binding rights or obligations between or among its members or any other entities under domestic or international law.

¹ CL 140/3

IV. Strategic Objectives

5. Through enhanced and applied knowledge about soil resources, the Global Soil Partnership will:

- Create and promote awareness among stakeholders that healthy soils and sustainable soil management are the precondition for human well-being;
- Address critical soil issues that are globally and regionally relevant for sustaining the provisioning ecosystem services through soils, paying attention to links with water and other resources;
- Guide acquisition of soil knowledge and targeted research in accordance with national conditions and needs to address applied challenges on the ground;
- Develop sustainable management strategies for different soils considering their potentials and limitations for different types of uses;
- Promote access to soil information and advocate the need for new soil surveys and data collection;
- Promote investment and technical cooperation in all related soil issues to address fundamental issues in different regions;
- Promote institutional strengthening and capacity development of soil institutions at local, national, regional and interregional levels; and
- Promote necessary public and governmental awareness of soils through recognition of the World Soil Day (December 5th) and celebration of the International year of Soils.

V. Composition and Governance

6. Governance of the Global Soil Partnership is proposed to be composed of the following elements:



Partners

7. The Global Soil Partnership should become an interactive, responsive and voluntary **partnership**, open to governments, regional organizations, institutions and other stakeholders at various levels.

Intergovernmental Technical Panel on Soils (ITPS)

8. Establishment of an Intergovernmental Technical Panel on Soils (ITPS) is proposed to provide scientific and technical advice on global soil issues. Members of the ITPS shall be nominated by the

GSP Plenary Assembly for an initial term of two years, renewable for one additional term (with agreement of the GSP Plenary Assembly). These experts should act in their personal capacity, not receive instructions from any government or institution, and provide the best possible scientific and technical knowledge available. The ITPS will advise the GSP and FAO itself as well provide an authoritative technical voice on global soil issues.

GSP-Secretariat

9. The Global Soil Partnership Secretariat will be the coordination and facilitation body in charge of facilitating the implementation of the GSP actions through its regional partnerships and networks. The GSP will be hosted by FAO in view of its global mandate.

Regional Soil Partnerships (RSPs)

10. Regional Soil Partnerships will be formed among interested and active stakeholders in the regions. These RSPs will work in close coordination with FAO Regional Offices and will establish an interactive consultative process with national soils entities and relevant regional institutions.

Plenary Assembly

11. The Global Soil Partnership Plenary Assembly will be the main yearly meeting of ITPS members, GSP Executive Secretariat, representatives of the different partners and members to FAO. This assembly will be in charge of reviewing and prioritizing GSP actions, and facilitating a balanced regional decision making process.

Pillars of Actions

12. The GSP will address five main pillars of action:

- 1) Promote sustainable management of soil resources;
- 2) Encourage investment, technical cooperation, policy, education awareness and extension in soils;
- 3) Promote targeted soil research and development focusing on identified gaps and priorities;
- 4) Enhance the quantity and quality of soil data and information;
- 5) Harmonization of methods, measurements and indicators for sustainable soil management.

Financial Assessment and Implications

13. Financial implications of the GSP rely on its principle of “partnership”. Each partner may contribute with different inputs for the successful implementation of the GSP. FAO will lead the GSP implementation process and will, through a prioritization in its programme of work, guarantee a basic budget from its regular programme to facilitate reasonable functionality.